Ty:

Hope your meeting with Doug Tompkins goes/went well. I faxed Peter (so he'll have it when he gets back) suggesting that the time is ripe for him to be contacting Jerry Mander.

Attached are Jerry George's email and the last week's worth of the "Questions" topic on the WELL, so that you don't get blindsided by anyone's responses to my postings. Though I doubt it. I got one appreciative note from <krsnaboy>, but nothing else other than <boswell>'s ravings.

I understand Jerry's note, but there is also a weariness in it that I don't share yet. It's the biggest danger we face right now: that we'll pull the plug because we are too tired or have run out of imagination. That's what happened to Ruth, I think. Her leaving was probably best for her, and may well have been best for WE, but I think it was for the wrong reason: exhaustion rather than not sharing the vision. If WE's time is past, so be it. If it's we who can't keep going, then we should change doctors, but not euthanize the patient. That's how it feels this afternoon, anyway.

I'm sorry if you had to ruffle JB's feathers. Trying to work cooperatively on something like this is hard and can be hard on egos. But we finally have to say, "This is where the buck stops," even if the letter isn't quite the one JB or David or Peter (or I) would do if it were ours alone. The alternative, though, is taking forever to try to find consensus or just handing it to one person and not trying to shape it jointly, neither or which feels preferable.

Talk to you tomorrow.

Mike

X-Sender: diggerjg@mail.well.com
Date: Wed, 29 May 1996 09:28:45 +1000
To: mkstone
From: diggerjg@well.com (Gerald W. George)
Subject: comments

Mike,

Though I have read the WE conference I have no interest in what appears to be a circular and unproductive debate. Whole Earth, in whatever form, is in desperate need of fire not twaddle. It needs the voices of doers rather than stewers. Peter, though once a doer, has become a stewer. So has J.B. So have we all as we grow long in the tooth. That is the problem. Throw open the editorial gates to dragon slayers. The more space given to those who stand to one side and report on the battle the more the rag sounds like every other.

The single identifier of a suitable Whole Earth contributor is not writing ability or association with whatever the editors see as cool. Look for dirty fingernailed commitment and a willingness to share what the world looks like from his or her unique place.

About the tool thing. It isn't about testosterone. Doers, all doers, use tools to magnify their ability to get the job done. They modify their tools or use them in unique ways that work better for them. That is what Whole Earth once shared - a great little extension you could add to a trenching tool that let you muck out the septic tank without jumpin in; Wavy's discovery that cops won't club a clown; and space colonies that were real escapes from the space race and the threat of nuclear war. Stewart still loves to whip out his multi-purpose tool and lay waste to a fence post with the saw blade while skeptics jaw muscles go limp.

Is there still a context for this idealized Whole Earth way? I think so, but I'm not in it. Nor, with all respect, is anyone now at Whole Earth.

Whole Earth has had a good life. Pull the plug now. Let it die with whatever grace it has left. Do not put it on life support. Let Whole Earth be proud of the work of its children and grandchildren and let them use their youth to carry the example of Whole Earth in their own way. The spirit of Whole Earth lives in our memories. Let the body go. Let it join the spirit in our minds where it belongs. It has lived well. Now let it rest.

My comments are not directed toward anyone or any group. The senescence of Whole Earth has been long in developing.

You all have my best wishes.

Jerry

we.440.17: quiet desperado (krsnaboy) Thu 23 May 96 20:31

so now the question i shoulda started with:

how can i help?

or rather: how else?...
(check's in the mail;
i'm gonna extend my subscription.
- consider it a vote of confidence.) ;-)

we.440.18: (fom) Fri 24 May 96 01:38

Now there's a trend! Maybe I should subscribe too (having never done so).

we.440.19: Michael K. Stone (mkstone) Tue 28 May 96 12:22

>17
>how can I help?
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Thanks, James! That alone, and the vote of confidence that goes with it, is a wonderful help. Here are some others I can think of, some of which pull together threads from several of these WELL topics:

1. You (which is to say, any of you reading these topics) can help by telling us what it is you value most about WE. No need for simple back-patting or butt-kicking -- actually, there's always need for both, but that's not the point here. What I would very much value would be knowing: what will you miss most if WE passes from the scene? What keeps you subscribing? What would you want most to see preserved if we decide to go for resurrection in some different form?

Is it some specific content? Point of view? Attitude? Design? Particular contributors? Ad-free environment? Frequency? Number of pages? Density? We're trying to formulate a reader survey to go with the letter we're writing to subscribers, but it will be shorter than this, and your responses here could help us a lot.

2. Other side of the same thin coin: What could we lose without losing you? What do we do that isn't that valuable to you? What would you just as soon do without? What changes (including additions) would make WER *more* valuable to you?

3. What about the name? What about changing back to CoEvolution Quarterly? Or to something else? Would that make a difference to you?

4. What would you pay for a subscription to keep WE going? [If people are willing, I'd like to get those answers by email, to see what anyone says before they are influenced by others in the conversation. Then, if I get any answers, I'll post the results and throw the topic open for discussion].

we.440: Questions only

we.440.12: Michael K. Stone (mkstone) Tue 21 May 96 15:42

BTW, since Ty's having a little WELL trouble, I'll download and forward any responses to him. You can also email him at tcashman@aol.com if you want to make a proposal or say something directly to him.

we.440.13: Something's missing in the newspaper (boswell) Wed 22 May 96 07:09

Respond or Pass: bio tcashman
Login: tcashman Name: Tyrone Cashman
Directory: /home/t/c/tcashman Shell: /usr/local/shell/picospan
Last login Tue May 21 10:47 (PDT) on pts/65 from pm1.well.com
Plan:
Mail Address: tcashman Registered: Wed Nov 13 16:39:48 1991
Computers: mostly a mac
Terminal: dumb

we.440.14: Michael K. Stone (mkstone) Wed 22 May 96 10:43

finger: -m option ignored
Login: boswell Name: Gerard Van der Leun
Directory: /home/b/o/boswell Shell: /usr/bin/csh
Last login Wed May 22 10:12 (PDT) on pts/39 from x25.hooked.net
Plan:
Mail Address: boswell Registered: Fri Jun 22 14:03:59 1990
Computers: IBMPC
Terminal: vt100

trend -- 1986-1990
boswell-- 1990-

!

we.440.15: John H. Maurer (steeldrv) Wed 22 May 96 11:28

He

we.440.16: knah (hank) Wed 22 May 96 23:35

The significant difference? Terminal emulation.
Bos knows what a vt100 is, and why to emulate it.

Someone please set Ty up.

we.440.17: quiet desperado (krsnaboy) Thu 23 May 96 20:31

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Would you pay more (less?) to keep WE ad-free?

5. Do you think you'd read WER if it were on the Web and not on paper? What would you pay (subscription or per-view) to read it?

6. We're looking hard at moving our offices to somewhere less gentrified than Sausalito. Anyone know any good cheap space (let's say ballpark 2000 sq feet) or anyone interested in sharing space? For right now, let's assume S.F. Bay Area.

7. Do you know any organizations (or individuals) that we should be contacting (or that you could help us contact) about becoming strategic partners for joint projects, underwriting, investing, mailing list exchanges, etc., etc.?

8. Are you -- or organizations you know -- potential advertisers?

Thank you in advance. Your answers to any of these questions, along with your ongoing discussion and ideas in this conference, can help us as we work toward a plan.

Mike

we.440.20: Something's missing in the newspaper (boswell) Tue 28 May 96 13:13

What is it about this project that forces people to think smaller and smaller and cheaper and cheaper as the years grind on?

we.440.21: (fom) Tue 28 May 96 14:53

I'm still wondering if anyone can answer my question, which I will restate now. What is a ballpark, estimated, nonexact, rough figure for how much it costs to publish the magazine, including everything, per year?

It's hard to think clearly about subscriptions and ads and salaries without some idea of this.

we.440.22: Michael K. Stone (mkstone) Tue 28 May 96 15:05

I assume >20 was an answer to my questions in >19. Here are two responses:

1. Except for mentioning our search for less yuppified digs, I didn't intend to imply that we're only looking for answers that say "smaller and cheaper." That's one way to bridge the income-expenses gap, and it's for sure one we are exploring. But those questions are meant to be open-ended: what's important to you about WER? What would you preserve if we change? What isn't important? What would you add? Please feel that you've been invited to

answer in as expansive a way as you are moved to.

2. We've heard from readers who say, "WER is too dense. There's too much information. I feel guilty that I'm not through one issue before the next one arrives. I read other magazines partly because their ads give me good information." Etc. I don't have an opinion on smaller and cheaper (or on ads), but I would like to know how widespread any of those opinions are.

we.440.23: Something's missing in the newspaper (boswell) Tue 28 May 96 15:10

Well, I'd say that any readers who cannot get through one issue before the next arrives are reading impaired.

we.440.24: Something's missing in the newspaper (boswell) Tue 28 May 96 15:12

What's important about WER? Two things.
1) The name.
2) The subject matter covered.

Everything else, especially the institutional headset that has led to this present impasse, can be thown away...as indeed it is. Problem is the name and subject matter are going with it.

we.440.25: Michael K. Stone (mkstone) Tue 28 May 96 15:42

fom:

A rough figure would be $800,000 for production, plus circulation expansion expenses.